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## **Postcolonial Bombay: decline of a cosmopolitanism city?**

*Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*

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## **Abstract**

Discussions of cosmopolitanism in Bombay often focus on the rubrics of communal tension, tolerance and violence, and frequently report the decline of a once cosmopolitan city, especially from the communal riots and bombings that occurred in the early 1990s. However, claims that the city has undergone a general social transformation since the 1990s need to be tempered by the multiple forms of cosmopolitan imaginations and practices that exist in the city. There are a wide variety of alternative cosmopolitan formations – not all of them progressive - reflected in civil society organizations, lifestyle changes for different groups, and often vividly reflected in film. This paper will chart two examples of contemporary cosmopolitanism. The first part of the paper explores the cautious optimism of film in the promise of cosmopolitan Bombay during the early years of Independence, before briefly discussing how cinema later attempted to reflect the destabilizing of the postcolonial vision of urban national development. The second part of the paper begins with discussion of the contemporary cinematic portrayal of elite-oriented global cosmopolitan modernity, and then contrasts this with a different form of global cosmopolitan modernity articulated through the work of the Slum/Shack Dwellers International network. This discussion conceives cosmopolitanism as *social*, marking a counterpoint to the tendency in discourses of liberal cosmopolitanism that emphasizes the agency of the globally aware individual. Methodologically, the paper seeks to demonstrate that relating often analytically separate realms such as film and civil society can provide a wider politico-cultural lens through which to examine urban change.

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## Introduction

Bombay has long been coupled with notions of cosmopolitanism (Appadurai, 2000; Prakash, 2006). The writer Pico Iyer (2003) has described the city as inevitably cosmopolitan given its economic and cultural draw within India. He has written of Bombay as “the center of the subcontinent's bright lights, big-city dreams – home to the strenuous fantasies of ‘Bollywood’ and hunting-ground of mobsters and their molls - is at once the ‘Capital of Hope’, to which hundreds of thousands of newcomers flock each year, dreaming of making their fortunes, and a decidedly ruthless place, where more visitors find jobs than homes” (Iyer, 2003: 3). Gyan Prakash (2005: 499) has written of the city’s “captivating imaginations, its representation as a place of desire and dreams”. It is a city, Iyer (2003: 3) relates, that is both “beachhead for the modern” and “multi-cultured port”, a “haven of tolerance” for Hindus, Muslims, Parsis, Christians, Sikhs, Jains, and others bound in a “money-minded mix”. Its kindred spirits, he suggests, are those other island staging-posts of people, capital and modernity, Hong Kong and Manhattan. Bombay has been for centuries a focus for global trade around the Arabian Sea and beyond, owing in large part to its endowment with one of the largest harbours in South Asia, and, especially from the mid-nineteenth century, has long been attractive to a wide range of migrants. Conversely, the figure of the city as cosmopolitan is a constant feature in narratives of its recent decline (Prakash, 2006; Varma, 2004).

Most discussions of cosmopolitanism in Bombay focus on the rubrics of communal tension, tolerance and violence, and a range of commentators have remarked on a decline of a cosmopolitan city, marking as watershed the communal riots and bombings that occurred in the early 1990s. Appadurai (2000) describes this period as the ‘decosmopolitanization’ of Bombay, while Varma (2004) writes of the city’s ‘provincialization’. However, notwithstanding the force of these events within the city, claims that the city has witnessed a general social transformation from the early 1990s onwards need to be tempered by the multiple forms of cosmopolitan imaginations and practices that have circulated the city. There are a wide variety of alternative cosmopolitanism in the city – not all of them progressive - reflected in civil society organizations, lifestyle changes for different groups, and portrayed

often most vividly in film. While there are important distinctions with the past, these cosmopolitanisms often resonate with the Bombay that existed before the 1990s.

In this paper, I will begin by narrating the destabilizing of the notion of a cosmopolitan city through the postcolonial period. I will argue that in the half century that followed Indian Independence in 1947, the undermining of the cosmopolitan city was closely linked to a growing disenchantment with the modernizing state and prospects of urban opportunity and justice, along with a related history of communalism and violence. However, rather than characterizing this destabilizing as ‘decosmopolitanism’ or ‘provincialism’, I argue that Bombay is a city of multiple cosmopolitanisms not all of which take communalism and violence as their central points of reference. I will chart just two contrasting examples of this in the latter half of the paper, one a global consumption oriented cosmopolitanism, and the other a learning network of civil groups working in informal settlements.

### Locating cosmopolitanism

In contrast to the preoccupation with cultures and individuals in the ‘North’, the paper connects with a growing interest in the different ways in which people living in the ‘South’ become cosmopolitan, including work that has traced the formation of sub-national, subaltern or rural cosmopolitanisms (see, for example, Gidwani, 2006; Gidwani and Sivaramakrishnan 2003; Hall 2002). Cosmopolitanism is notoriously difficult to define, and as Pollock, *et al* (2000) suggest, this may in part be because definition, with its attendant possibilities of universalism and exclusion, seems an *uncosmopolitan* thing to do. I take cosmopolitanism to refer to a particular kind of worldliness, a cultural pluralism that connects different sites and people. Following Mignola (2000: 721), cosmopolitanism is “a set of projects towards planetary conviviality”, distinct from globalisation as a set of designs to manage the world. ‘Planetary’ should not be confused with the scale of the globe; cosmopolitanism can be more or less inclusive or exclusive, and it can be predominantly global, national or local in character, for instance in some multicultural neighbourhoods (Sandercock, 2003).

Mignola links cosmopolitanism to the emergence of the colonial modern world, and connects this with attempts by the modernising Western nation-states to assert authority over the rest of the world through the global design of Christianity and the civilising mission. He goes on to usefully distinguish between cosmopolitan projects and critical cosmopolitanism. The former arise from within historical global designs such as the civilizing mission, and have failed to escape the ideological frames of these designs despite often being critical of them. Critical cosmopolitanism refers to the perspectives of those exterior to global designs. He elaborates: “By *exteriority* I do not mean something lying untouched beyond capitalism and modernity, but the outside that is needed by the inside. Thus, exteriority is indeed the borderland seen from the perspective of those ‘to be included,’ as they have no other option” (Mignola, 2000: 724). If cosmopolitan projects are critical of colonial modernity they do so from a perspective within colonial modernity, whereas critical cosmopolitan projects are located in the exteriority and issue forth from colonial difference, often in the form of ‘cosmopolitanisms from below’. As Pollock *et al* (2002: 582) write: “Cosmopolitans today are often the victims of modernity, failed by capitalism’s upward mobility, and bereft of those comforts and customs of national belonging”.

I will consider three instances of cosmopolitan imaginaries, all of which take the city and its modernity to be central. First, an effort by the legendary film director Raj Kapoor to depict in the early years of Independence a form of national modernism that was closely linked to notions of cosmopolitanism. This effort cautiously portrays a progressive nationalism that would recreate Bombay in the image of Prime Minister Nehru’s modernist vision of a planned and just city providing opportunities and services for all. The city is portrayed as a potential site of cosmopolitanism, as a space that welcomes and assists migrants from all over India regardless of background, a potential vividly interrogated in the popular film, *Shri 420*. In Mignola’s (2000) terms, this is a cosmopolitan imaginary that emerges from the interior rather than the exterior, linked to the nationalist vision of open, tolerant and well planned cities. The paper goes on to briefly trace the destabilizing of this cosmopolitan imaginary of Bombay through the developmental crisis of the

1960s, the violence of the national emergency in the 1970s and the riots of the early 1990s, and connects these shifts to changing portrayal in film.

Second, I consider a particular cosmopolitan imaginary at work in contemporary film, especially new family film, which presents an image of modernity as global consumption. This casts an image of an exclusionary cosmopolitanism reserved for the city's globe-hopping elite. This cinema portrays glamorous, globally aware individuals, predominantly in luxury residential and café interiors in Bombay or elsewhere in the world, and often set against dramatic panoramic views that hover above the lives and interstices of the city. Third, the paper then shifts from the panoramic views that drift above the city in the 'city of spectacle' to the ground level, to the 'city of debris' (Mazumdar, 2007). This part of the paper traces a form critical cosmopolitanism that emerges from modes of social learning and solidarity present in a network of civil society groups based in informal settlements, Slum/Shack Dwellers International (SDI).

SDI is an international network of nongovernmental (NGOs) and community-based organizations (CBOs). The Indian SDI group, known as the Alliance, is a key node in this network and originates in central Bombay, in the struggle for housing, infrastructure and services. This struggle is peripheral to Bombay cinema and in sharp contrast to elitist consumption-oriented cosmopolitanism. The analysis shifts from the portrayal of the city in film to a distinct register of inquiry and experience, and focuses on what constitutes the imaginaries and practices of a transurban civil society network. SDI can be characterised as form of critical cosmopolitanism issuing forth from an exterior. My central concern is with how SDI's cosmopolitanism is produced, and here I focus on SDI's cosmopolitanism as *social*, reproduced through the frames of group learning and solidarity. This marks a counterpoint to the tendency in discourses of liberal cosmopolitanism that emphasise the agency of the individual (Calhoun, 2003). Calhoun critically locates much cosmopolitan discourse in the drive for world citizenship and global democracy developed from Kant's famous late eighteenth century essays written in the period of emerging nation-states and individual rights (see also Mignola, 2000). In Vertovec and Cohen's (2002) influential collection, *Conceiving Cosmopolitanism*, various contributors worry over the complicity between

cosmopolitanism and a Eurocentric liberal universalism that emphasizes the rights and responsibilities of the global citizen (Rattansi, 2003).

These three instances of cosmopolitan imaginaries are distinct in form, nature, constituency and objectives. The first two are internal cosmopolitanisms in that they are connected to elitist visions of the modern city, and the third is a critical cosmopolitanism that emerges from groups occupying the vacuum of nationalist state modernism and are largely excluded from the lifestyles and spaces of the contemporary elite cosmopolitan. However, the examples of elite consumption-oriented cosmopolitanism and of SDI are connected in that they are imaginaries that speak back to conventional discourses of cosmopolitan Bombay by not taking the communalism and violence of the 1990s as their central reference points. They remind us that there are histories and presents operating on a variety of registers which, while connected in different ways to communalism and violence, operate beyond the commonplace observation of a “portrait of cosmopolitan Bombay in ruins” (Prakash, 2005: 499).

#### Film, urban space and modernity

Methodologically, the paper connects two seemingly distinct registers of experience, narrative and portrayal: film and civil society. Film is a key repository of the urban imagination in Bombay, continually reproducing and contesting narratives and images of the city as variously cosmopolitan or divided, violent or hospitable, booming or in decline, collapsing or developing. Mazumdar (2007: 197) argues that cinema is “the major reservoir of the urban experience in India”, and brilliantly reveals the role of cinema as an archive of the modern that houses allegorical images of the city, claiming that cinema is “*the* most innovative archive of the city in India” (Mazumdar, 2007: xxxi). Kaarsholm (2007: 1) echoes this view: “Indian films have not only portrayed the process of urbanization as a struggle towards coming to terms with and formulating agendas for modernity, but also as reactions to and counter-programmes against this process”. Ashis Nandy (1998: 7) has been still more explicit, arguing that “the popular film *is* low-brow, modernizing India in all its complexity, sophistry, naiveté and vulgarity. Studying



popular film *is* studying Indian modernity at its rawest, its crudities laid bare by the fate of traditions in contemporary life and arts”.

As a highly popular visual and experiential field, cinema registers distinct and significant impacts on urban discourse and imagination. It is the starkest arena where the ‘city of spectacle’ – of film, television, media, advertising, and design - is portrayed, a visual, experiential moment through which to reimagine the city, and which resonates with the many ways in which the material city and its people are changing (Mazumdar, 2007). Film has the capacity to illuminate the lived spaces of the city, and to portray the city in different ways. The paper seeks to open up the relationship between cinematic space and urban social space<sup>1</sup>.

In contrast, civil society organizations produce their own narratives about social change, and seek to contest the nature of change through multiple imaginaries and practices. The civil society groups I explore in this paper operate in what Mazumdar (2007) refers to as the ‘city of debris’ - of informal settlements, dense neighbourhoods, street hawkers, traffic congestion, construction debris, and refuse – which variously resonate with and diverge from the city of spectacle. This is the domain of lived experience, everyday struggle, routine and organization, and cannot be straightforwardly reconciled with the world of film. The city of spectacle and the city of debris intersect in a variety of ways: in the lives of civil society groups who loyally watch the latest films and sing their latest songs; in the cable television or film advertising that is so commonly found in hutments in informal settlements; by indirectly informing public debate about the nature of urban change and the city’s inhabitants; or in portraying visions of the past, present and future of

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<sup>1</sup> Indian cinema is a complex industry, and at its widest includes Bombay-based ‘Bollywood’ film produced in Hindi, and films produced in Tamil, Telegu, Kannada, Malayalam, and Bengali. Bombay-based Hindi film predominates in India and has taken on a large international audience amongst Indian diasporas as well as in the Middle East, parts of Africa, Russia and throughout South and Southwest Asia. It operates on a far smaller annual turnover than Hollywood, but produces a much higher quantity of films, most of which fail to return a profit. In this paper I am concerned with Bombay-based, films which have generally sought to be ‘all-inclusive’ in audience appeal (Kaarsholm, 2007) and which have combined dancing, simple melodies and extravagant spectacles with narratives of everyday life.

Bombay's urban spaces. Taken together, the intersections, homologies and divergences between film and civil society offer a wider politico-cultural lens through which to view Bombay's contested cosmopolitan imaginaries. In particular, for my purposes in this paper, this juxtaposition of film and civil society reveals specific relations between the city and narratives and images of urban cosmopolitanism.

Cosmopolitanism and modernity can be closely interlinked, and film and civil society offer two useful realms through which to read those changing relations. It is perhaps unsurprising that Bombay's modernity has often been thought of in cosmopolitan terms given the city's historically high number of migrants and multicultural make-up. Modernity, then, is a keyword in this paper, understood here as a multiple, changing site through which particular imaginaries and practices of the new city are deployed. These are efforts to break from present or past conditions and design or live a different kind of urban life. Again, these can be more or less inclusive or exclusive, global, national or local. The three examples explored reveal specific instances in postcolonial Bombay where the relation between cosmopolitanism and the modern city is mobilized in particular ways. In each instance, the specific form of the relation between cosmopolitan and modern alters in imaginary and practice, but the key elements of cultural pluralism in relation to cosmopolitanism and new imaginaries and practices of urban life in relation to modernity remain in each case.

The paper is based on fieldwork conducted over several research visits to Bombay, and especially two trips between October 2001 and March 2002, and November 2005 and June 2006. This research has focused on informal settlements, infrastructure and social justice, and has involved in particular a wide range of interviews with state officials, NGOs and CBOs, including repeated interviews and meetings with over thirty members of the Indian Alliance and other members of the SDI network, as well as observations of their work. The analysis of film is taken from existing scholarship, and in particular the work of Ranjani Mazumdar (2007), Ravi Vasudevan (2000), Ashis Nandy (1998) and Preben Kaarsholm (2007).

### **From cosmopolitan to provincial city?**

Of cosmopolitan Bombay, a great deal of attention has been given in recent years to the ethno-religious riots and bomb blasts of the early 1990s (Appadurai, 2000; Varma, 2004), to the recent terrorist attacks on the train network (Punwani, 2006), and to attempts to depict the city as a 'global city' (Banerjee-Guha, 2001; Grant and Nijman, 2002, 2004). While any discussion of cosmopolitanism and Bombay must be set against these backdrops, I hope to show here that there are other cosmopolitan imaginaries and practices in the city that do not take communalism or violence as their points of departure. However, before proceeding it is important to set the paper in the context of recent changes that have informed debates about cosmopolitanism and the city.

At a general level, the last 15 years have demonstrated that Bombay's capital-induced cosmopolitanism is not inevitable. It has become commonplace since the early 1990s to talk about the demise of a cosmopolitan city and the emergence of an intolerant, xenophobic city in its place (Appadurai, 2000; Varma, 2004; Virani, 2001). This is due in particular to the mass riots that took place in late 1992 and early 1993, which followed the destruction of the Babri Masjid in Ayodhya (in the state of Uttar Pradesh in north India) by Hindu extremists. The events spurred existing local tensions, resulting in the worst riots in the city's history: 900 people were killed and the psychosocial geography of the city was drastically altered. The riots were followed by thirteen bomb blasts on 12<sup>th</sup> March, 1993, the most destructive bomb explosions in Indian history, which killed over 250 and left 700 injured. The bombs targeted key political and economic structures in the city, including the stock exchange and the political headquarters of the Hindu extremist party, the Shiv Sena (Shivaji's Army), and were widely interpreted as retaliation by Muslim gangs to the riots (Zaidi, 2003).

Gyan Prakash (2006: 98) states: "The communal violence and bomb blasts left many people wondering if Bombay's cosmopolitanism had just been a façade", but rightly cautions: "The death of the city gives birth to an imagined past" (*ibid.* 88). Tensions between Bombay's different groups were, of course, present in the city before these riots. In 1956, shortly before the city was made the capital of the new linguistic state of Maharashtra, there was violence between groups demanding that

the city become the capital of a Gujarati state and those demanding it go to Maharashtra (Appadurai, 2000: 628). In 1984, the city witnessed the first major communal riots since Independence (Punwani, 2003). In many of these cases, the Shiv Sena played a crucial mobilising role (Hansen, 2001). One of the most xenophobic regional parties in India, the Sena is a pro-Marathi movement formed with the objective of ethnic control of Bombay and Maharashtra. Founded in 1966 by former cartoonist Bal Thackeray, who remains the party's president and authority, the party has sought to fight for the 'sons of the soil' through any means possible.

Initially, south Indians were the targets, their very presence portrayed as responsible for denying native Maharashtrians jobs. Gradually, the enemy morphed into Muslims, who were closely associated with the Pakistani 'terrorist threat' in Sena propaganda. During the 1980s and 1990s, the party capitalised on the waning support for the Left following, in particular, the unsuccessful attempts by unions and left-wing parties to resolve the textile strike in the early 1980s (Shaikh, 2005). In more recent years, the Sena has associated itself with the national Hindutva (the land of Hinduness) movement across the country, and in particular with the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), a major national party of the Hindu right. As Appadurai (2000: 643) has observed, this articulation frames the city "as a point of translation and mediation between a renascent Maharashtra and a re-Hinduized India".

The zenith of the Sena movement arrived when the party made it into power at both the city and state level in Maharashtra in 1995. It was during its time in state government that the party renamed Bombay as 'Mumbai'. Mumbai has been commonly used historically by Marathi speakers, distinct from the 'Bambai' used by Hindi speakers. This renaming should not be confused as a straightforward effort to shake off an English colonial heritage; it is an active attempt to reinscribe the space of the city as Hindu, to the exclusion, in particular, of Muslims (Hansen, 2001)<sup>2</sup>. This has often manifested itself in the demolition of informal settlements

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<sup>2</sup> It also involved the renaming of various roads and buildings, including the city's iconic Marine Drive, the backdrop for many films set in Bombay. Although still known throughout the city as Marine Drive,

with high proportions of Muslims. The Sena has since lost the state to Congress, but retains control of the municipal corporation. Despite recent preoccupations with feuds among the Thackeray family leadership, and a number of defections to Congress, the party retains a strong grassroots base in Maharashtra. The process of ethnicization of city-space linked to the shift to 'Mumbai' represents, for Appadurai (2000), a critical moment in the 'decosmopolitanization' of Bombay, what Varma (2004) calls the city's 'provincialization'. However, notwithstanding the scale and force of these events, claims that Bombay has undergone a general social transformation from the early 1990s onwards are overstated, and fail to account for the multiple forms of cosmopolitan imaginary that operate on a variety of historical and spatial registers in the contemporary city. They assume that the city before the 1990s was cosmopolitan, and attribute too much causal efficacy to the riots and subsequent bombings. In addition, there are a wide variety of alternative cosmopolitan rubrics, reflected in civil society organizations, lifestyle changes for different groups, and often vividly portrayed in film. While there are important distinctions with the past, these cosmopolitanisms often resonate with the Bombay that existed before the 1990s.

### **National modernism: film, planning and urban justice**

In the early postcolonial period, following Indian Independence in 1947, a great deal of film – especially those of the legendary director and actor, Raj Kapoor – connected the city with the nationalist vision of modernist planning and social justice. Independence linked the nationalist movement with the projects of development and democratisation, both of which were often presented as signalling a break with colonial government (even if the continuities were stronger than implied, see Bose and Jalal, 1997; Corbridge and Harriss, 2000; Legg, 2006). The constitution combined fundamental and directive rights that enabled universal suffrage, welfare reform, and reserved places for groups such as *harijans* (*dalits*, or 'the oppressed'). The vision of nationalist modernism emerged most powerfully in these early years of Independence, when the Indian state was wrestling between

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the formal name is now Subhash Chandra Bose Marg, after the nationalist anti-colonial leader who was often accused of fascist sympathies due to his links with the Nazi party in Germany.

Ghandian conceptions of India as village-based and Nehruvian visions of India as an urbanising country moving towards modernity. In this latter narrative, the cities were to be the loci of progress, opportunity and social justice. Bombay, the commercial capital of India since well before Independence, became a key site for this vision.

Many films of this period sought to portray the possibilities and dangers of national modernity through the city. Narratives of urban alienation and moral corruption, often represented in figures of the tramp and the refugee were particularly common, alongside utopian visions of urban equality. I connect this moment with the 1955 classic of Indian cinema, *Shri 420*, directed by and starring Raj Kapoor (Figure 1). *Shri 420*, along with several other films of the 1950s, addressed the opposition of city and countryside. One of its most famous songs, ‘Ramayya Vasta Vayya’ “generates an imagined universe of the village as a counterspace to the harshness of the city” (Mazumdar, 2007: 45). Kapoor captured a notion of the city as both a place of class division and oppression, narrated through films like *Awara* (1951) and *Shri 420*, and a site of struggle for social justice, echoing the frequent labour strikes of the period (e.g. of the mill workers) and the activities of the communists (Prakash, 2006). Writing about this period, Ravi Vasudevan suggests (2000: 116) that “the cinema of that time communicated a popular democratic perception which worked through some of the rationalist and egalitarian approaches of the liberal-radical intelligentsia, but on its own terms”.



**Figure 1: Shri 420, Film Poster**

Kapoor frequently deployed the figure of the tramp, as Kaviraj (2007: 69) writes: “In some Hindi films, particularly those by Raj Kapoor, the figure of the tramp as Chaplin is taken up with modification as the ‘natural’ carrier of such an outsider’s vision”. His (1951) *Awara* portrayed this through the homeless man, an unloved traveller on an uncharted lonely path singing songs of happiness (Bakshi, 1998: 104), a theme echoed in *Shri 420* and *Jagte Raho* (1956) (see Gayatri Chatterjee’s 1992 (2003) study, *Awara*). A close associate of Kapoor’s in film, Khwaja Ahmed Abbas, formulated the story for *Shri 420*. Abbas was a committed Marxist who was already becoming disillusioned by politics by 1949, when he published a series of articles in the Bombay-based popular magazine, *Blitz*, listing the socialist promises Nehru had made but was failing to implement. Of Abbas, Kapoor and *Shri 420*, Bakshi (1998: 108) writes: “They had a critique of the unfulfilled promises of Independence but they were not entirely disenchanted then”. *Shri 420* connects the city with Nehruvian national discourses of economic opportunity and social justice. Indeed, Kapoor has acknowledged that he sought to portray, in Varma’s words (2004: 67), a “period of Nehruvian effervescence about the possibilities of a modern, socialist and secular nation as embodied in the space of a well-planned city”. Varma (*ibid*) has argued that the film “commented on the hopes and desires of countless migrants who flocked to the city looking for both economic opportunity and social justice”.

When the film was released in 1955, Bombay's cinema halls and streets echoed to Ramayya Vasta Vayya, the film's main song which "virtually became a national anthem" (Bakshi, 1998: 107). The film itself is a rags-to-riches tale of greed, urban immorality, and modernist possibility. It begins with the main character, the young, Chaplinesque Raju played by Kapoor, setting off on the road and ending up in Bombay. On his way along dusty roads from the north Indian town of Allahabad, much is made of Raju's poverty and amiable naiveté. To this lively, cheery tune, he skips along the lonely road in a nonchalant manner:

Mera joota hai Jaapani  
Yeh patloon Englistaani  
Sar pe laal topi Russi  
Phir bhi dil hai Hindustani

(My shoes are Japanese  
My trousers English  
On my head, red Russian hat  
My heart's Indian for all that)

Raju soon comes across a sign stating that Bombay is 420 miles away and decides to follow it. The 420 in the title of the film has a double-meaning, it references not just distance but a section of the Indian penal code enforced for crimes of petty fraud and trickery, so the title in effect means *Mr Fraudster*, connecting immorality with Bombay from the start. Raju arrives in the city to bustling streets of traffic, people, buying and selling, making him dizzy and appear lost and out-of-place, in sharp contrast to the relaxed joviality with which he traveled to the city. His first meeting is with a beggar, who tells him that people in Bombay hear nothing but "the jingle of coins". The beggar goes on to tell Raju that the educational qualifications, commitment to work, and gold medal for honesty that Raju says he has brought with him will mean nothing in Bombay, but that "if you live by lying and cheating there are 420 ways" to get by. This signals Raju's arrival in India's commercial city *par excellence* – he has traveled from a provincial Indian town to an island separated from the mainland not just by the Arabian Sea but by the ruthlessness of capital.



For Varma (2004: 65), Raju's song announces an "arrival into cosmopolitanism", embodied in his scrappy attire as much as in the portrayal of Bombay as city of migrants. The film casts Bombay as both a potential site of greed, moral corruption, and alienation, and as potential site of opportunity and justice. Through the film, different characters and story lines portray a city of progressive nationalism – a well planned city tolerant of difference that provides opportunity and amenity to all citizens. For example, Raju is exposed to narratives of urban inclusiveness and justice through a group of pavement dwellers he befriends in the city. This contrasts with the provincial and exclusionary nationalism that other characters, beset by greed, embody. The film narrates Raju's redemption from greed and trickery and ends on a note of optimism for the city and its future, emphasized by the image of Raju and his new found love, Vidya, looking out hopefully at a panorama of the city in the final scene. *Shri 420* suggests to the viewer that the city, with commitment from the state and the public, can be a site both for cosmopolitanism and progressive nationalism.

However, off the set Kapoor became increasingly disillusioned as he aged, and found progressively less hope in the prospects of the modern and just city. Bakshi (1998: 94) argues that the progressive nationalism Kapoor sought to optimistically portray in Bombay met its end in the violence of the national emergency in the 1970s: "In some ways the enterprise of Kapoor and the Indian 'project' ran parallel", from the hopefulness of his *Jis Desh Mein Ganga Behti Hai* (The Land where the Ganges Flows) to the jaded *Ram Teri Ganga Maili* (Ram, your Ganges is soiled/dirty), which journeyed from "its Nehruvian 'tryst with destiny' to Indira Gandhi's assassination and the growing political and social violence" of the late 1970s. On the emergency and its aftermath, he writes (1998: 93): "How did we journey from the ideals that Nehru appeared to embody to their betrayal by his own direct descendents?" A national state of emergency, lasting between 1975 and 1977, had been declared by President Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed on the advice of Congress Prime Minister Indira Gandhi. This followed opposition attempts to secure Gandhi's resignation when the High Court of Allahabad declared that her election had involved corrupt practices. Gandhi used the emergency to assert authoritarian control over her party and the opposition, to aggressively put an end to

trade and student union strikes and protests, to demolish informal settlements across the country, and to install a draconian family planning program of forced vasectomy. Much of the violence of the emergency was played out in cities.

However, the destabilizing of the early postcolonial vision of urban development cannot be solely attributed to the authoritarianism and violence of the emergency alone. From the early 1960s, there was a growing disenchantment with the nationalist vision of the well-planned, ordered and just Bombay which emerged from rapid, haphazard urbanization and growing urban poverty. For example, in 1965, a collection of Bombay's leading architects - Charles Correa, Pravina Metha and Shirish Patel - were involved in the publication of an influential special issue of the Bombay-based architectural magazine *Marg* (Modern Architects Research Group), *Bombay Planning and Dreaming*. This issue argued that the solution to easing congestion in Bombay lay in a new, well-planned modernist 'twin city' - New Bombay - made-up of twenty inter-connected but self-contained towns. If *Marg's* arguments for New Bombay were highly influential among Bombay planners and middle-classes, it was as much to do with a sense of hopelessness around the possibilities of improving rapidly urbanising congested Bombay, than it was for an enthusiasm around modernist planning ideals (Shaw, 1999).

The discussion of the postcolonial model of national urban development and its subsequent crisis, then, needs to be connected to a confluence of factors, including histories of political violence and a failure of planning and administration, which connect nation, development and identity. Cinema reflected this, particularly around the themes of violence, despair, and the sense of failure and nonlegality of the state. Indeed, Mazumdar (2007: 7) has argued: "Reworking a certain vision of modernity in which the state is the sole repository of legitimate action, the hero took on the role of smuggler [e.g. *Deewar*, 1975]...The moral divisions between legal and nonlegal, the legitimate and the criminal, grew increasingly fuzzy, opening up a reflection on dystopian forms in urban life". In this context, the cinematic antihero emerged, embodied most explicitly in the actor Amitabh Bachchan (e.g. *Amar Akbar Anthony*, 1977), reminiscent of the James Dean or Marlon Brando rebel characters of post-war Hollywood cinema. This is a form that expressed the insecurities of modernity that it then addressed through poetic justice

– the form of the melodrama, a performance of excess and emotionally charged film. The ‘angry man’ figure of 1970s film addressed the crisis of the period – a crisis of national development - as a furious figure representing the margins of urban society and railing against a corrupt and often repressive state (Mazumdar, 2007).

If in the 1950s Kapoor sought to portray with cautious optimism a Nehruvian vision of Bombay as cosmopolitan and progressive, this popular vision had unravelled in three decades, losing ground to disillusionment, anger and frustration. In Bombay, since the emergency, another key instance of the destabilising of a modern cosmopolitan imaginary can be identified in the Bombay riots of the early 1990s, which emerged not just from communal tensions but from resentment at the enduring poverty in the city: “After 1993, the deep emancipatory moment of the urban modern, which spoke to new visions of community, independence and freedom, was shattered” (Mazumdar, 2007: 30). However, far from marking the ‘decosmopolitanization’ or ‘provincialization’ of Bombay (Appadurai, 2000; Varma, 2004; Virani, 2001), alongside the slow unravelling of the nationalist developmental and cosmopolitan view of the city a variety of other cosmopolitan modernisms have taken shape. One example of this, well documented in cinema, is a global consumption-oriented cosmopolitanism associated with high-end urban interiors. While the next part of the paper begins by discussing this cosmopolitan global modernity and its portrayal in Bombay cinema, it will shift then focus to a different set of global cosmopolitan imaginaries and practices that emerge not from elite lifestyles but from poverty and informal settlements.

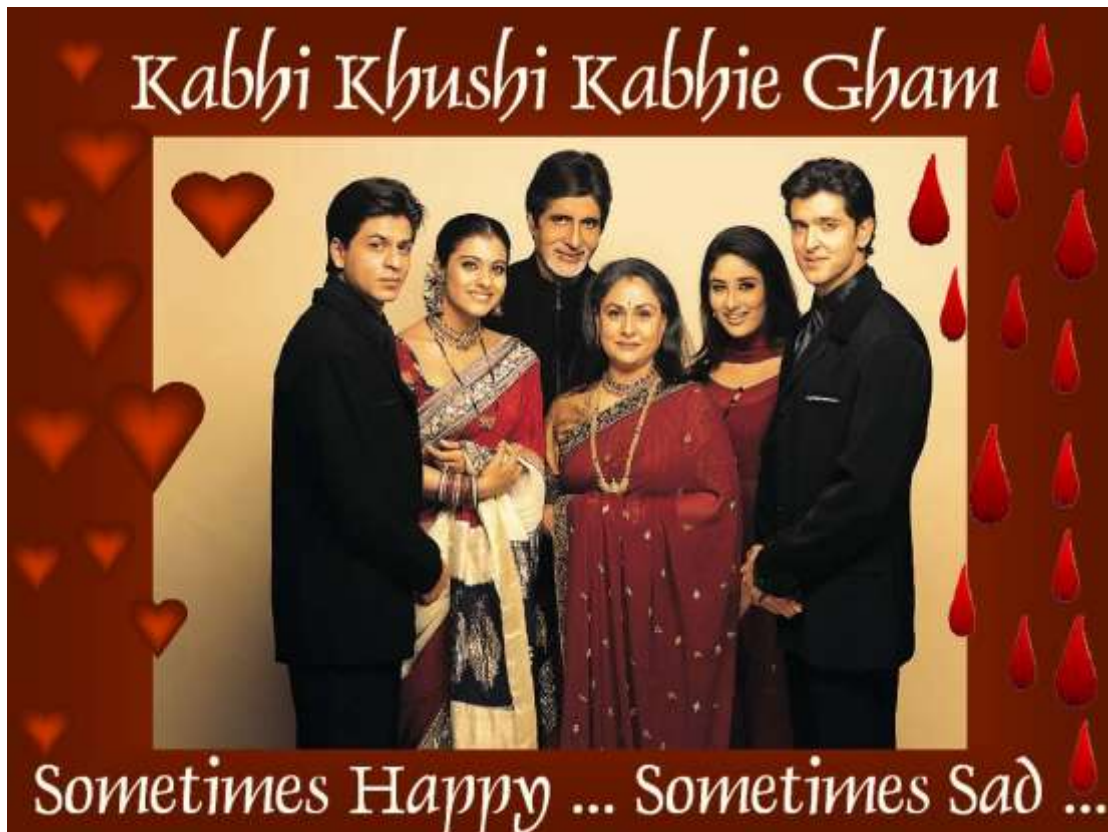
### **Global modernism: new urban cosmopolitanisms**

Ranjani Mazumdar (2007) traces a particular cosmopolitan imaginary at work in recent film, especially new family films, which present an image of modernity as global consumption and which connect with a range of changes to the political, economic, social and physical landscapes of the city. These films often reveal glamorous, globally aware individuals, predominantly located in luxury residential and café interiors in Bombay or elsewhere in the world. She points to the materialization of a new kind of “surface culture” that is central to this emergent

city of spectacle, where surface “refers to the expressive forms of architecture, advertising, print, television, film and fashion” (Mazumdar, 2007: 110). This form of modernity is rooted in an explosion of new kinds of high-end design, advertising and commodity circulation, creating distinct links between consumption and the aestheticization of urban space: modernity as consumer cosmopolitanism. As Indian cities have increasingly globalised, laden with a wide range of images and commodities of contemporary capitalism, “the urban references are not just Bombay and Delhi, but London and New York” (Mazumdar, 2007: xxii). Mazumdar describes this as a kind of urban desire for scale and spectacle, vividly expressed in film. This desire is marked by an anxiety around the cultural politics of globalisation. For example, there is a persistent return in recent films to a specific ‘Indianness’, a particular understanding of tradition, reflected in, for instance, the family photograph advertising used for *Kabhi Khushi Kabhie Gham* (2001), a film about a globalised family that moves through high-end spectacular urban India to the urban spaces of London<sup>3</sup> (see Figure 2).

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<sup>3</sup> Indeed, part of the explanation for the popularity of Indian films in the Middle East is to do with the portrayal of the large, relatively stable and traditional family unit that resonates still in new family film, as opposed to the narrative of family dysfunctionality often shown in American films (Kaarsholm, 2007).



**Figure 2: Kabhi Khushi Kabhie Gham, Film Poster**

Mazumdar positions these changing depictions of the city in film in a wider context of urban transformation in Bombay, linking these disparate sites with the concept of urban delirium, “in which commodity display, the crisis of space, new kinds of architecture, the spectacle of film, and television converge” (2007: 111). Much of the interior spaces in new family film mimics the experience of proliferating air-conditioned shopping malls in the city, where the shopper is exposed to “the commercial, aesthetic, and architectural splendour of interior spaces” (Mazumdar, 2007: 148). Mazumdar argues that in South Asian cities, this commodified world is possible *only* through simulation: “The panoramic interior expresses a crisis of belonging, fear of the street, and the desire for the good life – all at once” (*ibid*). These films are “created as perfectly designed and landscaped sets, the new interiors have emerged as the space of the ‘virtual city’, where the Bombay of claustrophobia is made to physically disappear” (Mazumdar, 2007: 117). There is little scope for urban social justice in these elitist articulations of the city, which seek not to address the city’s poverty and ‘residual spaces’ but to banish them from view. However, this ‘city of spectacle’ continually intersects with the ‘city of debris’.

These cinematic depictions represent changes that have taken place in the city over the past 15 years. If Bombay is often spoken and written of as India's 'most modern city' (Rao, 2006), this discourse has taken a new turn with the emergence of a managerial and technical elite associated with the growth of global financial services in particular parts of the city (Grant and Nijman, 2002). The geographies of these groups are increasingly segregated and exclusive, reflecting new spaces of global connection and local disconnection, and associated with particular images of what the modern Indian city should look like. There has been an important role in this regard, as Partha Chatterjee (2004: 143) has argued, for the "intensified circulation of images of global cities through cinema, television, and the internet", and through the increasing tendency of the elite and middle classes to travel globally. In addition, the proliferation of new residential enclaves that mimic European and American cities, often expressed vertically given Bombay's high real estate costs, provide escape from the city of debris through elevation. These changes and forms of urban escapism are accompanied by the transformation of interiors, from cafes and residences to banks and offices.

The state plays an active role in these changes, and is increasingly seeking to attract investment and to develop infrastructure that will facilitate new globalising service and financial industries. Recent years have witnessed intense debates around the transformation of public space, provoked particularly by an increasing corporatisation of space that has followed India's economic liberalisation reforms in the early 1990s (Corbridge and Harriss, 2000). For example, a recent controversial ruling by the Supreme Court will see two-thirds of the vacant former 'mill lands' in the centre of the city transformed not into social housing as many had hoped but into shopping malls and corporate entertainment (on the decline of the mills, see D'Monte, 2002). These developments have been closely associated with the demolition of informal settlements, which in recent years have been coded less by ethnicity than politico-corporate Bombay's self-declared trajectory to become the 'next Shanghai' by 2013 (Bombay First, 2003). To this end, an estimated 90,000 huts were torn down during the winter of 2004-2005, leaving some 350,000 people homeless and without alternative accommodation.

Mazumdar (2007) argues the city of debris and the city of spectacle converge and diverge in a range of ways, from the self-styled high-end cosmopolitan identities portrayed by groups of the poor, including imitations of western fashions and the surge to embrace the flood of new technologies; film and television; and the transformations in residential and commercial interior design. While her case is compelling, there is a danger here of reducing the 'city of debris' to a set of residual spaces that simply seek to imitate the city of spectacle. Within this city of debris are multiple forms of living, getting by and imagining the city that do not conform to this consumer-oriented city of spectacle, even in the informal hutments that contain the cable television and saturated advertising that Mazumdar highlights. There are distinct social imaginaries and movements being carved out from the interstices of experiences and struggle in the Bombay 'slum', and it is to one revealing example of this that I now turn. This example briefly tells the story of a distinct set of imaginaries and practices that remains global in scope but which are produced through the work of people living at ground level in informal settlements rather than the high-end residential complexes that tower over the city. This movement, like several other social movements and civil society groups in the city, articulates a progressive urban imagination that seeks justice for the poor. This imagination resonates with the modernist visions of filmmakers like Kapoor working in the early years of Independence in its collectivist struggle for universal provision, although it is distinct both because of its global scope and in its insistence that the informal settlement, rather than the national state, remain the central reference point. In addition, it is another instance of cosmopolitanism that exists largely outside the rubric of communalism and violence.

### **Slum cosmopolitanism: global exchange and the informal settlement**

A few blocks from Mumbai Central railway station, in the generally middle-class neighbourhood of Byculla, is the resource center of the National Slum Dwellers Federation (NSDF) and Mahila Milan ('Women Together'), two of the groups that make-up the Bombay chapter of Slum / Shack Dwellers International (SDI). SDI seeks basic housing, infrastructure and services for the urban poor, and is a global network that owes its existence to a programme of international exchanges initiated largely by a mixed bag of activists working in central Bombay. The resource center

is a support network for NSDF and Mahila Milan members across the city, and acts as a nerve-center for the national and international network of which the NSDF and Mahila Milan are a part. It is a hub of activity: the three phones ring frequently (every couple of minutes or so, mostly for male leaders of NSDF) and people from the local area constantly come in and out, some depositing money, some asking for loans, and some for advice from the NSDF individuals available. During telephone calls, as Appadurai (2001: 30) has commented based on his work with these groups, leaders “exchange information about breaking crises, plans and news across these various locations in Mumbai – and also across India and the world...a call [is] as likely to come from Phnom Penh or Cape Town as from Mankhurd or Byculla [in Bombay]”.

The third organisation in this Bombay network is an NGO called the Society for Promotion of Area Resource Centres (SPARC), an NGO set-up by middle-class activists in the early 1980s. This tripartite group refers to itself as the Alliance (McFarlane, 2004, 2007). Mahila Milan is predominantly but not exclusively a woman’s organisation. Most of the women live in pavement huts and are generally formally uneducated, although many have now been members of municipal committees and have travelled to different countries to take part in exchanges with other groups. The Byculla group is made up of fifteen predominantly Muslim ‘leaders’ (one of which is male) most of which have gone to around five different countries in the past fifteen years or so. However, as one SPARC official said, they “never introduce themselves as international leaders...their identity is very local...they view their role as peer support and will talk about their own area”. 600 women are members of Mahila Milan in Byculla alone (Patel, 2001: 7), and groups members generally work well together despite their often different religious, ethnic and caste backgrounds. Mahila Milan’s work predominantly involves organizing and running daily savings schemes; providing a forum for mobilizing and discussion women’s support, rights, and short- and long-term plans; negotiating with the local state, building and police officials; and participating in exchanges. These exchanges involve groups of poor people traveling from one settlement to another to share stories and experiences with other poor people in what amounts to an informal ‘training’ process. The exchanges have facilitated the formation of the loose transnational network, SDI.



SDI is a host of civil society groups supported by a range of donors and governments (see Edwards, 1999; Patel and Mitlin, 2002; SDI, 2003; McFarlane, 2006a). The network spans predominantly Asia and Africa, including Cambodia, Colombia, India, Kenya, Namibia, Nepal, the Philippines, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Swaziland, Thailand, and Zimbabwe, and is associated with groups in many more countries. SDI, following Batliwala (2002: 396) has a ‘grassroots’ focus. This is to say that the network is predominantly constituted and controlled by those “who are most severely affected [by urban poverty] in terms of the material condition of their daily lives”. There is a regular program of exchanges internationally that have been ongoing since the late 1980s. Patel, Bolnick, and Mitlin (2000: 402) suggest SDI’s work “is not a global process that focuses on international policies and practices but it is global in outreach and strengthens groups’ capacity to deal with what is oppressive and exploitative within their local environment.” In SDI, struggle remains the locality (for example, the local municipal corporation), and this is informed in part, as Saskia Sassen (2003: 11) has remarked, by “the knowledge and tacit innovation of multiple other localities around the world engaged in similar localized struggles with similar local actors”. It is a capacity-building movement that seeks to develop the skills of the poor in order to negotiate with government, and even to self-build housing and infrastructure solutions. In campaigning for housing, infrastructure and services it is modernist in its objectives, but in its methods SDI differs from many twentieth century movements in that it is cautious of the state, seeking to negotiate with whoever is in power without ever becoming aligned to a single political party.

SDI’s work has been driven by a set of strategies that largely originated with the central Bombay group, including daily savings and credit schemes, supporting women in development, enumerations<sup>4</sup> of settlements, mapping of settlements, exchanges of poor people between settlements (locally, nationally and internationally), the forming of national networks, house and toilet exhibitions,

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<sup>4</sup> Enumeration in SDI refers to a census conducted by people on their own and in other urban areas.

land-sharing models<sup>5</sup>, and partnerships with authorities based on a commitment to ‘non-party alignment’. This ‘box of tricks’, as one SPARC leader put it, has travelled through exchanges. The Indian group has played a key role in co-ordinating, designing and participating in exchanges and in the movement of strategies and ideas around the network. The strategies listed above are explicitly framed as guidelines to be translated from place to place, rather than as models that are to be copied. For instance, in the translation between places, daily savings may become monthly savings in accordance with different earning patterns, and model houses for exhibitions may draw on different materials and deploy different spatial dimensions in accordance with local conditions and preference. Alternatively, one group may prioritise sanitation, whereas another may prioritise data collection through enumeration in the hope of using the data to influence authorities. In contrast to the global circulation of high-end interior and exterior design we find in parts of globalising Bombay, design in SDI is grassroots oriented and based on basic local needs and preferences informed by global conversation and exchange.

Through both a programme of learning that has emerged around the travelling strategies described above, and the production of new modes of solidarity, SDI constructs a particular critical cosmopolitanism. I do not wish to suggest that there is a singular cosmopolitanism in SDI, but trace the general form that these cosmopolitan imaginaries take and the practices that inform them. Solidarities reflect the notion that SDI member groups, while living in different contexts, share a perceived common space on the socio-economic and political peripheries of the city. These solidarities are reproduced through the travelling of knowledge, ideas and practices that takes place around the strategies outlined above. SDI’s cosmopolitan imaginaries are social: they are produced through learning practices that take place in group activities (McFarlane, 2006b). The social form of SDI’s particular kind of cosmopolitanism marks a contrast from the emphasis in much cosmopolitan discourse on the agency of the individual (Calhoun, 2003; Rattansi,

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<sup>5</sup> ‘Land-sharing’ refers to state housing policies that involve housing construction for the poor being cross-subsidised through part private sale, a scheme that has proven highly controversial in Mumbai in the form of the Slum Rehabilitation Authority (SRA) scheme (Mukhija, 2004).

2004). The next two sub-sections will expand on social learning and solidarities in more detail.

### Social learning

The most frequent way in which learning is referred to in SDI is in terms of ‘learning-by-doing’ in groups (ACHR, 2000; SDI, 2003; Patel and Mitlin, 2001). Learning is conceived as taking place “in situ” (Homeless International, 2000: 7). For example, SPARC have written about learning in exchanges: “Normally NGOs design workshop-type exposure programmes where the week’s programme is organised in advance. We have never used that system, because we are quite clear that the most effective way in which people learn is practically, by doing things” (*ibid*). This means that learning occurs through an “immediate immersion in the ongoing projects of the host community” (Appadurai, 2002: 41). This immersion can be any of a whole range of activities, ranging from “scavenging in the Philippines and sewer digging in Pakistan to women’s savings activities in South Africa and housing exhibitions in India” (*ibid*). Taking part in practices in a given place mediates the relationship between different groups. Visiting groups tend to participate in whatever local activities are going on at the time of the exchange, from methods for designing toilet blocks to fraught negotiations with local contractors around the delivery of construction materials. The insistence on social learning taking place through groups of the urban poor rather than through professionals characterises learning in different parts of the SDI network, as the following quotation from Amita Mbaye, part of a Senegalese Savings and Loan Network, indicates:

When I asked the technician (who works with us in Dakar) to show us how [housing] layout plans are designed, he used such sophisticated jargon that I barely understood a word he said. In Protea South (Gauteng, South Africa) during our last evening, we asked a woman to draw us a plan. When she explained house modelling, I understood and felt that I too could do it (Patel and Mitlin, 2002: 132).

To some extent, then, learning in SDI is a product of displacement. This is learning as a relational process combining ‘near’ and ‘far’, a process that in some measure

calls such binaries into question. SDI members learn about daily savings, enumerations, exhibitions, exchanges, or negotiations with authorities, by participating in the practices of groups and through local, national and international exchanges. Knowing in SDI, then, is the ability to participate in the practices of social groups, and to be open to the ideas and activities of struggle in different localities, meaning that both learning and the result – for example, a model house, toilet block, or set of documents for an enumeration - take on a cosmopolitan character. Ideas about housing construction, enumeration, daily savings, or negotiating tactics with the state, garnered through years of experience living in often neglected parts of the city, circulate and are translated through exchange in different urban contexts, with the Bombay groups taking on a key ‘teaching’ role in the SDI network.

In exchanges, particular individuals and groups within SDI are more or less influential, and there is a politics of replication at work in the network that reveals community groups as not simply part of SDI networks but subject to them. For example, in the Piesang River area of South Africa a member of the Homeless People’s Housing Federation “explained that the visitors from India [Bombay] had advised them to build communal water points, as a collective space where women could talk about the Federation – however, the Federation women of Piesang River had their minds set on the conventional on-site access to water, and this had remained their demand” (Huchzermeyer, 1999: no pagination). This indicates a tension in SDI. On the one hand, SDI seeks to encourage autonomy and change in the learning process as knowledge travels. On the other hand, SDI, by virtue of encouraging the travelling of knowledge, creates the possibility of travelling knowledge and ideas, especially from influential SDI leaders in groups such as the Bombay Alliance, marginalising local concerns.

Despite these difficulties of negotiating insider/outsider relations, the specific form of worldliness that SDI leaders reflect is constituted by local experience and translocal interaction, and is productive of the particular kinds of imaginations and practices of SDI members. There are political consequences of this locally: cosmopolitan knowledges are mobilised in local political negotiations, for instance through the use of enumeration data or housing exhibitions in political negotiations

(these politics are not without their difficulties, and I do not wish to appear to romanticise SDI's work – see, for instance, critical commentary in McFarlane 2004, 2007). This account of SDI's cosmopolitan practices parallels Craig Jeffrey's description of Jat young men's 'straddling strategies' in his paper in this volume (and see his earlier work on low caste leaders' political strategies, Jeffrey *et al*, 2005).

## Solidarities

While much cosmopolitan literature has described solidarity as solidarity to an abstract humanity at large (Rattansi, 2004), solidarity in SDI is not universal but specific and grounded. These are solidarities to other groups of the urban poor, and the specific solidarity networks are multiple and over-lapping, including neighbourhood SDI co-operatives, nation-wide SDI federations, and SDI as a translocal network of the urban poor. They are solidarities that reflect a sense of being in a similar position on the social, economic and political margins of the city; exterior to the global design and promise of capitalist modernity (Mignola, 2000; Pollock *et al*, 2000). They are structured in part through, for instance, class, gender, caste, ethnic, religious, and family based solidarities that might extend to rural areas or other towns and cities. Gender based divisions are perhaps the most important in SDI. These come in the shape of male dominated city groups, which in terms of decision-making and government negotiation often sit hierarchically above the female dominated savings groups. Translocal solidarities negotiate these multiple divisions and evolve through a range of activities that accompany exchanges, such as the sharing of stories about coping with housing demolition, musical events, festivals to mark the opening of new toilet blocks or the completion of new housing blocks, the vernacular documentation of exchanges through reports and, not uncommonly, even poetry about exchanges<sup>6</sup>.

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<sup>6</sup> For instance, Patrick Hunsley Magebhula, President of the South African Homeless People's Federation, has indicated some of this solidarity in his poem about the exchanges between South Africa and India, entitled 'Face to Face':

"Face to face with one another / Face to face with reality / Face to face with poverty / It is for real we are poor / It is for real we need each other / The grass cannot live without roots / Government cannot survive without people / Fish cannot live without water / We have to live for each other / We

Local solidarities do not just overlap with translocal solidarities in SDI, but are reconfigured by translocal exchanges. There is a fragmentation in this process as new solidarities get produced and existing solidarities are challenged. For instance, it is usually the same people that constitute exchanges, people that SDI leaders believe have become key illustrators of SDI's activities, such as the Byculla Mahila Milan group. ACHR has described these groups as "vanguard communities":

The ones up at the front of the line, the innovators, the risk takers, the go-getters. So in Bombay, you have your Byculla Mahila Milan, and in Pune [India] there's Rajendranagar. Then South Africa has its Philippi and Zimbabwe has its Mbare. In Phnom Penh you have Toul Svay Prey and in the Philippines it's Payatas. These communities become demonstration centers and hosts of innumerable exchange visits (ACHR, 2000: 9).

The use of these kinds of groups has the consequence of implying that these are more learned and worldly members of SDI. While this can create local tensions, some of these tensions have been addressed both through existing solidarities found in local SDI co-operatives, and through a sense of participation and exposure to SDI's international horizon through visits from other international groups. Solidarities produced through exchange are also gendered: it is generally women who go on exchanges, sometimes producing pride or resentment in husbands left at home. This is particularly unusual in societies such as India's, where it is, generally speaking, men who are more mobile, with women remaining at home or accompanying men, for instance in migration for work. Translocal solidarities in SDI are not universalistic 'citizen of the world' solidarities, nor are they necessarily about tolerance and openness. They emerge in the form of mutual support, even if that support and encouragement is often superficial (for example, sensitive issues

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have to come face to face with reality / It is for real that we need each other / The city cannot survive without the hobos who will eat the crumbs that fall from the rich / We are part of daily city life / We have come face to face with other squatters / We have come to learn from each other / Yes, we saw pain, courage, endurance and perseverance in one another's eyes / There were no solutions to our needs / We only had each other's unity, strength and experience / We were face to face with reality and poverty / We cannot live without India and India will suffer without South Africa" (ACHR, 2000).

such as domestic abuse only rarely emerge, and generally do so only among closer-knit local women's groups). While translocal solidarities are part of SDI's imaginaries, they must be seen in conjunction with SDI's travelling strategies outlined above – enumeration, exhibition, savings, land-sharing, etc. – which are the loci of learning practice. It is through a combination of practices of social learning around particular strategies with a sense of translocal solidarity extending across urban peripheries, that SDI's particular critical cosmopolitanism is constituted.

While most discussions of cosmopolitanism in Bombay focus on communal tension, the Indian Alliance and its work in the SDI learning network is a distinct example of critical cosmopolitanism reproduced through participation in group practices. SDI's cosmopolitanism offers a counterpoint to those of Western elites that have captured the attention of much of the resurgence of debates around cosmopolitanism, and emerges from groups whose experience of imperialism, contemporary development and globalisation differs markedly from some of the objects of analysis often explored in cosmopolitan debates. The social nature of cosmopolitanism in SDI contrasts with a tendency in literature on cosmopolitanism to focus on the agency of the individual subject, their imaginative and physical mobilities, and their appreciation of cultural diversity (Calhoun, 2003; Rattansi, 2004). In doing so, it marks a contrast to the global cosmopolitan modernity rooted in high-end consumption that is reflected in recent transformations in Bombay and portrayed in new family film. This is a cosmopolitanism that does not hover above the city in luxurious apartments and offices, nor does not seek to imitate the city of spectacle. It is produced through a translocal engagement in the everyday spaces of the city of debris, and resonates with struggles of the past in linking cosmopolitanism and modernity in an effort for basic urban services.

## **Conclusion**

The relationship between Bombay and cosmopolitanism has been multiple and changing throughout the post-Independence period, but it has always been crucial to debates and imaginaries of urban social justice. Cosmopolitanism has been

closely linked to notions of Bombay as a modern city, and at stake in these connections are some of the limits of what a socially just Bombay might look like and require. The postcolonial model of national development has been destabilised since 1947. This has been due to a confluence of state developmental and planning failures to meet the growing demand of housing, infrastructure and services, and the stoking of communal tensions culminating in horrific periods of violence, especially during the emergency in the late 1970s and the riots and bombings of the early 1990s. These histories have been captured and reflected in popular Bombay cinema, recalling Nandy's (1998: 7) assertion that Bombay film is "Indian modernity at its rawest, its crudities laid bare".

However, cosmopolitan imaginaries and practices have far from disappeared in the city, and those that exist inventively recast the relationship between cosmopolitan and modern. The claim that the city has experienced a general social transformation to a 'decosmopolitanised' city through the 1990s assumes that the city before this was cosmopolitan and attributes too much causal efficacy to the riots. This conventional narrative about Bombay's cosmopolitanism needs to be tempered by the multiple forms of cosmopolitan imaginations and practices that exist in the city. SDI is one such example, existing in contrast to the elitist consumption-oriented cosmopolitanism that Mazumdar (2007) traces in the lifestyle changes of different groups in the city and in the transformation of select urban interiors and exteriors, often captured vividly in film. These contrasting narratives and images outline an inclusive cosmopolitan modernism that is locally oriented but outward looking, against an exclusionary cosmopolitan modernism that is globally oriented and seeks to escape the local geographies of the city. While there are important distinctions, these cosmopolitanisms resonate with the Bombay that existed before the 1990s. SDI's cosmopolitan imaginary and modernist aims echo Kapoor's vision portrayed in *Shri 420* that looked optimistically for a Bombay that welcomed migrants and guaranteed collective provision and urban social justice. By contrast, however, SDI is suspect of the state, distancing itself from party-political alliances and seeking to negotiate with whoever is in power (McFarlane, 2004).



However, I do not wish to replace a binary of cosmopolitan/decosmopolitan with another of exclusive/inclusive cosmopolitanism. All forms of cosmopolitan are to varying extents inclusive or exclusive, implying that one important role for the critic is to illuminate the politics, limits and exclusions of different forms of cosmopolitan imaginary and practice. The paper underlines the need to pluralise and reconsider cosmopolitanism beyond the spaces and lifestyles of the global North. In addition, the discussion of SDI marks a counterpoint to the tendency in discourses of liberal cosmopolitanism that emphasise the agency of the individual, instead highlighting particular forms of cosmopolitanism imagination and practice are learned socially.

Methodologically, the paper has sought to demonstrate that relating often analytically separate realms such as film and civil society can provide a wider politico-cultural lens through which to examine urban change. Bombay cinema often reflects and sometimes interrogates changes that are taking place to the city itself, and registers distinct and significant impacts on urban discourse and imagination. Taken together, the juxtaposition of film and civil society offer broader sightlines for investigating changing forms of cosmopolitanism in postcolonial Bombay that do necessarily take communalism, violence or Hindutva as their key points of reference.

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